

Impatiens thrive in a pot outside our house.

Madison foursquare

93

This issue of *Madison Foursquare* is brought to you by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, who live at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704.

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Cover – Jeanne Bowman

[SC] Gorgeous cover, Jeanne!

[JG] Your lovely artwork reminded me of the strange wallpaper we uncovered in our dining room many years ago, after we removed the fake wood paneling that covered it.

Edle (not a misspelling) Oliversen was the matriarch of our house, many decades before we bought it. In my imagination, Edle loved the William Morris wallpaper that her husband brought home after building a house for a wealthy client. (Edle's husband, Otto really did work in the construction business with his brothers and sons. In the process of renovating our house, we discovered bits and bobs that looked as if they were "left-overs" from large jobs.) The possibly left-over wallpaper was exquisite, printed on heavy paper, inked in luscious colors, and best of all, the artwork was a repeated image of a bunch of lilac blossoms, Edle's favorite flower. (We surmise that she must have loved lilacs because the front and back yards of our house were bordered with a dozen lilac bushes. I imagine that she loved the way the fragrance of their blooms swirled through open windows in the early summer.) But back to the wallpaper. Its background color was a dark forest green, which beautifully contrasted with the delicate violet coloring of the hand-drawn lilac blossoms and the lighter green of the leaves. Sadly, Otto hadn't brought enough wallpaper to cover all four walls of the dining room, so Edle came up with a creative solution. Using an x-acto blade, she painstakingly cut each individual lilac-bunch image, each measuring about twelve inches by six inches. The work must have taken her hundreds of hours. Her plan was to paint the dining room walls the same dark green background color of the wallpaper, and then to distribute and glue the lilac images onto the dining room walls. But I imagine that her husband, Otto, objected to the idea of buying paint when they had plenty of paint left over from other jobs.



"Here's some perfectly good green paint. There's enough left to cover all four walls," he said. But the left-over green paint was a sickly, pastel green, and the effect no doubt disappointed Edle. I imagine that she sighed with regret every time she looked at the dining room walls and remembered all the work she'd poured into the wallpaper project,

painstakingly cutting out the lilac blossoms, all for a disappointing result. Painting over the thick wallpaper cut-outs would have looked awful, and so when Otto came home with some left-over wood paneling, she suggested that they cover the dining room walls with it.

Jae Leslie Adams

[SC] Re your comment to **Andrea** for issue 453, why are the ever-present geniuses on-line advising you to not talk to dogs? If you don't talk to them, who will? Cats and squirrels are lousy conversationalists.

Re your comment to me for #454, thank you for reminding me of Lakeside Café, which I like a lot. When I bike by in the mornings, it's usually bustling, but I don't stop there often because it's too busy. The other morning, I was strolling up Langdon St. and came across a sandwich board advertising coffee and a range of other products on the ground floor of one of the larger apartment buildings. It was a nice, but empty, little café. The name was catchy, The Shop at EBNS (which actually stands for Every Bitch Needs a Scrunchy.)

Re your comment to **Andy**, thumbs up on gummies!

Great comments on *Little, Big*. You are confirming my impression that a lot of references and commentary are passing by me. Thank you for pointing them out.

[JG] Re your comment to **Georgie** about benches being removed because they might encourage street people to sleep on them... I also find this infuriating. Turns



Prairie blooms on American Players Theater grounds

out that Madison bus shelters were partially designed in order to avoid the same outcome. So, no seating or minimally comfortable seating, and only partial roofs, to discourage vagrants from setting up house inside the shelters. I recall reading that these decisions were demanded by nimbies who feared that undesirable mass transit patrons would be tempted to spend too much time in their neighborhoods.

I imagine that in addition to disapproving of our backyard neighbor's monolith house's flat roof, "local man" might also be aghast at our neighbor's decision to plant luxurious sod on both back and front yards, including the space between the garage and street. There is no driveway connecting the garage and street. Nevertheless, we have observed cars parked on top of the grass a couple times already and Scott has sputtered, "does he think he will be able to plow snow off the grass?" It's a mystery. We haven't toured the monolith house yet and so have not had a chance to ask our Questions.

PDF = "Portable Document Format," which is actually a surprisingly accurate term describing how most people use PDFs.

Greg Rihn

[SC] Thank you for your comments on *Furiosa*. I have seen all the *Mad Max*-related movies so far and I expect I will see this one too, at some point, but it did not manage to lure us to the theaters. Maybe we're still a little burned out from *Fury Road*.

Re your comment to us, I liked your comments and suggestions on single-payer health care. We probably won't get it in our lifetimes because we have to spend all our time trying not to lose the nice things we already have.

Re your comment to **Andy**: really, Greg, you're going to call us "cozy", too?

Re your comment to **Steves**, Zoltar would be a great attraction at TurboCon.

[JG] I don't wish for a map in every book I read. I think I reach for a map when it seems like the author is consulting a mental map as they write their story. I remember – before GPS and smart phone maps – how I would always prefer to chart my route on a map rather than rely on someone's verbal directions. It's kind of like that.

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] I would have enjoyed the Laster kitchen display. The attention to detail and the patience

needed to accumulate the correct elements are impressive. I'm sometimes distracted by movie sets that do a particularly good job of recreating period detail, and a sometimes a little chagrined to be reminded that the 1970s, 80s and 90s all need to be treated as historical periods now with their own props, clothes and sounds.

When we saw *Proof* at APT a year or so ago, I remember how impressive the Touchstone theater set was because, since *Proof* was scheduled after the end of the regular season, the stage set did not have to be repeatedly torn down and re-set up to make way for the other plays using the same theater. The set designer could set up *Proof* and indulge themselves on props and details because the set would stay in place through the show's run. It was a strikingly lush set.

The Mary Nohl exhibit looks great.

[JG] Yeah, I would have loved to have seen the Mary Nohl show. And to have participated in the paint ballooning! In order to do such a thing on your garage door, you would probably first want to carefully apply painter's tape to protect the areas you didn't want to get clogged with paint (and which might damage the door mechanism), and shield other non-garage-door-areas from badly aimed paint balloons. But once that was done, the results might be joyous, depending on the paint colors you chose. I'd schedule a paint balloon toss every other day (changing colors each time), to allow the earlier splashes to dry before adding new colors; light colors first and darker colors later.

I love the idea of a Death-Cleaning Boutique. Seems like it could be extremely successful, even franchisable, though it's financial viability would depend on inexpensive space.

Walter Freitag

[SC] I'm rooting for success with your battle to save the cattails. I think cattails are beautiful. I should take some inspiration from your tough fight to do my own weeding. At least I don't have to worry about the weeds fighting back. Just the mosquitoes. On top of everything else, we have an infestation of Japanese knotweed to fight. Our new backyard neighbor in the Black Monolith house just had his small yard freshly sodded and I saw him mowing it the other day. After mowing he was carefully walking around blowing on it with a leaf blower. I don't know why. If he's been giving my yard the snake-eye lately, I haven't caught him at it. Still,

maybe I should try a little harder to beat back the weeds that probably threaten his flawless lawn.

[JG] **Scott**, you shouldn't have said that about not having any weeds that fight back. A few moments ago, as I was typing, Scott showed me the rash on his hands that appeared right after he did some weeding along the fence line. We're not sure yet what culprit weed was responsible for the injury.

Steven Vincent Johnson

[SC] That is a really cool picture of Kepler on the beach. I'd also choose to have the luscious-looking Martian Julip.

Catie Pfeifer

[SC] You looked great! The designs on the jacket lapels and scarf on the Emily Kaldwin piece were exquisite, go Etsy. Those boots were impressive, too. But I'd say you rocked those Hwoarang chaps. I most liked the shot of you on the bike at the Harley-Davidson Museum.

Re your comment to me on Erik Larson, I also liked *In the Garden of Beasts*. I thought *Dead Wake* (about the sinking of the *Lusitania*) was compelling, too, but my first, and still favorite, Larson book is *The Devil in the White City*. Part of the book is about the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago (the White City) but what really caught me was how they solved a vexing problem. The Fair's organizer, Daniel Burnham, desperately wanted to equal or exceed the success of the Paris Exposition of 1889 where they introduced the Eiffel Tower. He did not want to build another tower, but what kind of big engineering marvel could they come up with to dazzle the public in the time they had? You will have to read the book to find out.

[JG] Very cool costumes, Catie! How do you store the costumes in between cons? Do you keep them intact or do you cannibalize parts to make new costumes?

Andy Hooper

[SC] Thank you for the bittersweet story of Marvin, the Bennetts and Red Flannels.

Re your comment to me, I think you are right about China's plan for Worldcon. The Chinese love being in control and what better way to run things than to just do their own Worldcon? They have endless money and manpower to compete with Worldcon for attention, and can do one every year. Who needs the

Hugos, either? Then can invent and run their own awards show.

I laughed at your ideas for **Pat's** zine title. Christening her May zine as *Insert Title Here*, she should have expected some suggestions to float back to her. I considered offering *Pat-down* or *Pattycake*, but restrained myself.

Great letter column once again. I liked **Steve** (and, later in his own zine, **Jim H.'s**) defenses of APA writing vs. fanzine writing.

[JG] There's something very sad about Terry and Joy Bennett's marriage, in which he seems to have directed his wife in the role of one of his puppets and a tortured one at that. I assume that their relationship was a lot more complicated than their public performances, but I think I'd be dissatisfied if my legacy was submerged like Joy's was.

Hmm, you are no doubt correct that sports show binging makes book and TV/movie binging more difficult. And visa versa.

Re your comment to **Luke** about Madison's new women's baseball team, the Nightmares – I haven't heard much about them and am unlikely to go to a game, but I really like their name and logo. The name actually sounds like an appropriate one for a group of female horror hosts....



Carrie Root

[SC] Beautiful job on the deck restoration! Your picture on page 4 is priceless.

Thunder storms are fun, but my favorite part is watching storms from a distance. The best part about driving across the Great Plains is when there is a big old thunderhead in the distance, when you can see the entire thing, especially if it's still sunny at my location. Big lakes are good for that, too. My father's farm is on top of a hill and we could often view storms some distance away from there, but here in Madison we are surrounded by houses and trees and don't get to see much until the storm is about ready to clobber us.

Re your comment to **Jae**, your New Mexico-style enchiladas sound very good.

[JG] You published two photos in your apazine showing the before and after images of your renovated porch. But in my mind's eye, there is a third photo not visible



between those two – the one displayed behind you in some of your recent zooms: utterly pristine, new boards, and no furniture, no potted plants. That photo reminds me so much of some of the photos we took of our living room and dining room in 2009, after we had the main floor of our house renovated (insulation installed, new electrical, new dry wall, new windows, refinished maple flooring). We'd temporarily moved all our furniture into storage during the renovation, so as we stood in that big, empty, finished space, we both thought it resembled a ballet studio needing only mirrors and barre installed to complete the illusion. And we wished, for a very little while, that we could keep it that way, and not move the furniture back inside.

That's an interesting comparison – SF conventions and tech companies, though a con (or any volunteer project) encounters different obstacles when those in charge do not get paid.

Marilyn Holt & Cliff Wind

[SC] Don't feel too bad about failing to take a picture at Suzle's birthday. These days at the end of any social occasion, I can count on it finally occurring to me that I should have taken a picture.

I always enjoy your letters checking in with us. It's good to hear from you and the gang on the farm.

[JG] Your post-climate collapse story sounds interesting. I used to search out post-apocalypse novels, because I enjoyed the different ways authors made use of the opportunity to speculate about new and better civilizations, beginning with a blank slate. I don't avoid these stories nowadays, but I am more aware that we are now in fact floundering in the midst of a very real climate collapse, and that it is unlikely that it will be easy to "start over" any time soon.

Jim Hudson & Diane Martin

[SC] Thanks for sharing your “Drag, Cross-Dressing and Trans” article. You’ve been on a long journey; I hope you’ve reached a good place in your life where you can safely and comfortably be yourself.

I have noticed on *File 770* an uptick in articles about the Hugos lately. There’s a movement to dump the Retro Hugos that has generated controversy, along with plans to fix the Hugos so another Chengdu snafu can’t happen. All in preparation for the Glasgow Worldcon business meeting, I assume. I’m glad to be following all that business from a galaxy far, far away.

Our APT season has started off very strong with *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* and *Wolf at the Door* just a few days apart. The third play, a funny French farce, *Ring Around the Moon*, was interrupted by a couple brief rain storms, but luckily, we got to see the whole play with only a couple wet recesses.

Nice photo gallery once again. The Ariel-and-Lucy-with-cats picture is wonderful.

[JG] Thanks for sharing your understanding of the cross-dresser-drag-trans world. I think seeing all the options as existing on a spectrum as opposed to within boxes is an eminently healthy and useful point of view.

2001: A Space Odyssey seems to have been an influential film in my life. I keep seeing monoliths. Ever since we bought our big, black refrigerator, I’ve called it a monolith. And now our backyard neighbor’s house.... Here is a photo of the front of the house, the



The less monolithic side of the monolith house (You can see the back of our house behind and to the right.)

side that faces

Milwaukee Street, away from our house. It’s much more interesting, and less monolithy.

Thanks for describing the YMCA’s eGym. I mentioned it a couple times to Scott, but I clearly didn’t have all the information on how it worked. After reading your zine, I think Scott may be tempted to accompany me the YMCA and check it out.

Andrea Connell

[SC] Interesting tip about [r/ReadABookAndAdoredIt](#). I tend to read reviews in newspapers (*NYT*, *Washington Post*, *Isthmus*, etc.), magazines (*Locus*) and from some friends for ideas. I like getting to know professional reviewers and their tastes. I don’t tend to trust ordinary readers I don’t personally know. For instance, I have to page through a lot of Goodreads comments to get a sense of how good a particular book might actually be.

So sorry to read about the power outage. What a pain in the ass to lose so much food. I have always figured that an outage like that is so rare, that it would be worth it to take the risk vs. spending the money to set up a generator system. But now with climate change, bigger storms may become more common and a generator might make more sense.

Those dogs are impossibly cute.

[JG] Re your comment about lessons learned and generators, I read a couple stories about the Houston area, post-hurricane-Beryl, describing a mass scramble for generators. Heat, humidity and flooding conditions are making hurricane recovery a pretty miserable affair. (**Jim and Diane** – I hope you will keep us up-to-date on Ariel and Lucy’s situation.) There is a shortage of generators, and most of them seem to be ending up in well-to-do neighborhoods; other people struggle to afford or even find one. The *New York Times* ran the story, “A Hurricane Divide in Houston: Who Has a Generator?” ...And Beryl was just a category 1 hurricane, and the first in what promises to be an intense hurricane season. Whew.

Elizabeth Matson

[SC] Your yurt saga continues with, hopefully, light at the end of the tunnel. I hope you find a reasonable buyer very soon. The yurt appears to be in pretty good shape as shown in your photos. I expect your plan is to sell/remove the yurt and then sell the land? You have a nice piece of land out there, but, in my view, after living on a farm for ten years of my life, I

was not left with much desire to live full time in the country again.

[JG] Greenbush Cooperative would be the ideal buyer/inheritor of your yurt, especially if it means you won't have to store it someplace while you try to find a buyer and then have to ship it any distance. If they can't afford the price you need to charge, are there any trade possibilities?

Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] You were bucked off a horse? That seems like a bad idea. Does that happen often? On the other hand, the sale of Sadie sounded like a nice windfall for you. This business has its ups and downs, I guess (puns, as always, are never intended).

I hope the cardioablation went smoothly.

Ruth & Jim Nichols

[SC] Jim, I see the big-eared old guy in the wheelchair clearer in that pancake than Jimi Hendrix. I like the image of him speeding down King Street doing wheelies, burning rubber or blasting rock and roll on his on-board sound system for the entertainment of the many outside diners who now line both sides of the street on the 100 block. King Street used to be kind of seedy when I moved to town, now it's a food court. Times have changed.

Ruth, terrific piece on your solitary writing retreat up North. (Have I told you before how much I enjoy your travel writing?) It sounded like you were productive, which must feel good, and you were fine on your own for ten days and probably needed the break. Good for you. Door County is a good place if you're seeking a beautiful location where you can do as much or as little as you want.

Jeanne and I treat a trip to Rock Island from the Door County mainland as an all-day adventure. It takes time to drive out to the car ferry at Northport on the north tip of the county, ride the ferry to Washington Island, drive all the way across Washington Island to the foot ferry at Jackson Harbor and ride that to Rock Island, have enough

A wall mural by Triangulador. The Book Deal is a used book store on the west side of Madison.



time to hang out in the park before making the whole trip back. Those ferries don't run around the clock. We usually start fairly early in the morning grabbing coffee (make that Diet Coke or tea for JG) and a bagel or pastry on our way to Northport, maybe lunch or some other brief diversion on Washington Island, get to Rock Island by early afternoon, wander around and check things out, take the last foot ferry (4PM) back to the Washington Island, stop for a beer at Nelson's bar on the way across to catch a late afternoon ferry back to the mainland and dinner. Aim for doing this on your best (calmest) weather day (because two ferries and lots of open water). If we want to slow this down and spend more time on the island(s), we will book a room overnight on Washington Island.

[JG] I love how you took charge of your life with the "Able To" plan. Arranging your own writing retreat when you could not find another was a brilliant idea. I like the idea of setting up assignments! Minus the mosquitoes during your first couple days, the experience sounds rather idyllic.

My own theory about that zig-zag road between Gill's Rock and the ferry is that it was designed to make gorgeous autumn photos. I love that ride. I also love the ferry ride across Death's Door, and then the next ferry ride between Washington Island and Rock Island. I love the waves and the way light reflects on the lake surface, and the smell of fresh water. I hope you are able to take the ferries out onto the islands someday. Back to the peninsula... The first place I ever camped on my own was at Newport. The campsites are spaced out so widely that each campsite basically has its own beach, isolated from everyone else. I love it, though the beaches are much narrower than they were in the 1970s. But since then, it's earned a designation as an international dark sky park. Lovely. Egg Harbor is a pretty community. Have you heard the story of how it got its name from a food fight? Other people say that a Dutch explorer found meadows covered with shorebird and waterfowl eggs and so he called it "Eyren Haven" (Egg Harbor). Who knows. But I agree with you that

Door County feels magical. In recent years, we've spent more time driving from town to town via the interior roads which allows us to avoid the two main tourist-packed highways. Thanks for sharing the story of your trip, Ruth. I really enjoyed reading it.

Luke McGuff

[SC] Two trip reports, cool! You guys have been busy. Sounds like Joe took you on a great tour. I was a little envious of your drive in Joe's Valiant, but it's hard to imagine driving very far in Michigan outside a city going less than 60 mph and not getting run over. You saw a '65 Mustang at the Ford Museum. My second car was a '65 Mustang. Sadly, it only had a six-cylinder engine and automatic transmission, but happily it was a red convertible with a black interior and bucket seats. In my early driving days, I had a series of, let's call them "misadventures," with cars, so the Mustang ended up wrecked, but I enjoyed it while I had it.

There sure is a wide range of quality when it comes to hotel breakfasts, especially the self-serve variety. This is definitely a cost issue, as it has become less and less practical for moderately priced hotels to offer a full-service restaurant. Even more upscale hotels wrestle with this. The Concourse Hotel (the WisCon hotel) has still not bounced back completely from the pandemic. To this day their CIRC restaurant only serves breakfast, brunch and lunch. Dinner service is in The Bar. They probably can't fully staff The Bar and CIRC at the same time, so they split the meal service.

When it comes to travel adventures, succinct-ness is overrated. I enjoyed both your travel pieces.

Re your comments to us, I read that it was safe to look at eclipse totality in a couple news articles or I would not have done it, but in all probability, this will be my last total eclipse anyway, so no sleep lost. [JG – In fact, it is impossible to see totality while wearing eclipse glasses. One's whole view is all black and the sun's corona, which is the most beautiful part of totality, is not visible.]

Re electric cars, they are not perfect, but I believe they are better than internal combustion. There is hope that successful marketing and demand will encourage the development of better (more environmentally friendly) tech for electric, or other alternatively powered, vehicles. Gas engines probably can't be improved much more. Also, a lack of recycling for electric components does not mean recycling is not possible, in our economy. It just

means no one is currently making a profit doing it. As a society if we decide that we want stuff recycled for environmental reasons regardless of profitability, chances are it can be done.

[JG] Great trip reports! Thank you.

My usual eating strategy at hotels' "no-host" breakfast bars is to toast a bagel and eat it with a little cream cheese and jelly. I skip the eggs, breakfast meats, and waffles.

Sorry I missed Julie's and your birthdays. The gathering at the Union Terrace sounded like it was a lot of fun. But as Scott told you all, I was hiding out. I fell Tuesday – I tripped and face-planted onto the carpeted ramp leading into the theater auditorium, while carrying a soda. I stupidly prioritized protecting my drink from spilling and failed to protect my face, which took the brunt of my fall, a direct slam onto my nose. There was a lot of bleeding, but nothing broke and we ended up staying to see the movie (*The Quiet Place, Day One* – which was very good). A very nice lady made an ice pack for me, using a tied-off non-latex glove, which I held to my nose for most of the movie. Most of the bruising didn't show up until the next day: two black eyes, a swollen nose, and several lacerations on my nose. Miraculously, my glasses escaped unscathed. Scott and I went to a play Wednesday night – the really excellent *Wolf at the Door* at American Players Theater. Ironically, domestic violence was the play's central theme and I noticed quite a few people looking at me with worry-filled expressions. Embarrassing. I kept wanting to say, "no, no, it's not what you think." (That's the main reason I didn't show up to your birthday party Friday night – I was really bothered by people's expressions when they saw my face and came up with their own stories of what happened to me.) The bruising got steadily worse through the rest of the week. Wednesday night my iPhone failed to recognize my face. I am posting this cartoon rather than a photo, because the real thing is much too gruesome. Anyway, I decided to stick close to home until the swelling and bruising reduced. Happy belated birthday, Luke and Julie!

I'm curious about how your nephew, Ruin, got his name.



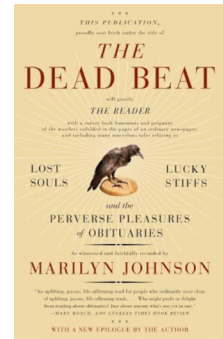
What's New

Book Review: *The Dead Beat*



***The Dead Beat: Lost Souls, Lucky Stiffs and the Perverse Pleasures of Obituaries* by Marilyn Johnson**

[SC] **Pat** loaned this to me and it was a cover-to-cover hoot! Johnson has been a staff writer and editor for several magazines and an obituary writer. She covered the beat with gusto, humor, and a deep understanding of the “dead beat.” She reflected on life as a dedicated obit reader, different styles to obits, who published the best obits and profiled her favorite writers. She had a chapter on an obituary reader/writer convention in New Mexico that sounded very fannish. The book was published in 2006 so the publishing scene has changed a lot since then, but it’s still fun to read today. Thanks Pat.



Little, Big – Book Four, The Wild Wood: Chapters 1 and 2

[SC] Chapter one opens with the mysterious Mrs. Underhill raising and preparing the stolen child, Lilac (now eleven), for her eventual role in the Tale. The current lesson has to do with sleep, something Lilac will eventually be required to do for a very long time, but doesn’t want to do just yet. So Mrs. Underhill takes Lilac along on some errands and the pair take off riding on the back of a stork to Edgewood house.

First they visit Sophie, asleep in her room. Lilac briefly tries to wake her, but Mrs. Underhill and the stork spirit her away in time. Then they get a look at the other members of the household at the time, Tacey, Lily, Lucy, Daily Alice, Auberon and Smoky before flying off again. The viewpoint changes to young Auberon in the Summer House deciding that trying to investigate the strange happenings at Edgewood might be hopeless. Then we return to Lilac and Mrs. Underhill as the stork takes them briefly to see an army in the sky led by the Generalissimo preparing for a last battle, but now it’s time for Lilac’s nap and she falls dutifully to sleep.

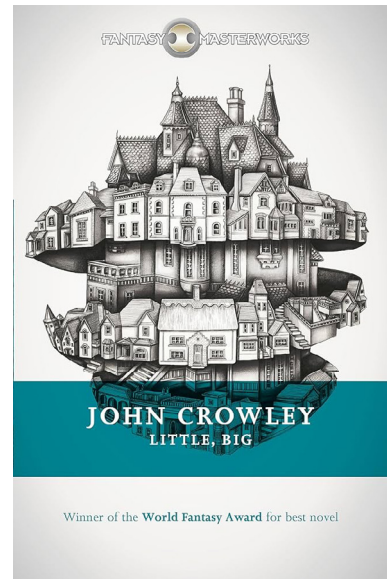
The focus returns to Auberon who skips out of the house giving the excuse that he’s off to a friend’s to play ball when he is actually going back to the Summer House to work on a play or screenplay about the Emperor Barbarossa battling the Pope. Meanwhile his mother Daily Alice takes a walk up to the stone table at the peak of the Hill beyond the walled garden. At the table she experiences a feeling and realizes she is being asked for something by “the day” (a spirit?) but she thinks of her family, feels her own power and refuses. “Not yet” she says

and the day turns away. The Tale is coming to take something from her, but there is too much still to do and the time is not right, so she tells it “not yet.” Far off a Black Crow calls “Cras. Cras.” (tomorrow, tomorrow.)

Sleep continues to be a major force. In this chapter we learn that Lilac’s fate in the Tale

is to sleep (perhaps forever?) Which seems like a sacrifice though characters often embrace sleep like a drug. This chapter is set prior to Auberon’s leaving Edgewood for the City, even as a child he wants to know more about what’s going on around him but seems unable to figure it out. And what about the Generalissimo and his army in the sky? Is this somehow inspiring Auberon’s interest in Emperor Barbarossa?

In Chapter two Smoky begins by reflecting on what he liked about parenting his daughters, though his skills did not work out so well with his youngest and only son, Auberon. I liked Smoky’s insight, “But there were limits even to his flexibility, he couldn’t as time went on stretch as much as he had once done, he found himself less and less able to ignore it when his character, growing ever more lobsterlike



and unsheddable, disapproved of or could not understand the Young.” He said a mouthful there.

Later, Smoky who’d never been a deep sleeper, wanders the house unable to sleep only to run into Sophie, once the queen of sleep, herself struggling with insomnia. They commiserate. At one point she laments “It seems so unfair. All of them up there fast asleep and I have to haunt the place.” The older among us understand that sentiment, at least from time to time.

The focus switches to Auberon and Sylvie in the City. We begin with a scary little story of Sylvie returning to her home neighborhood to seek out the local mystic, La Negra, who first told her as a child that she had a Destiny. Sylvie fears her unknown Destiny may be a threat to her lover, Auberon, so she wants it removed. But it cannot be discarded.

Later Sylvie gives a tour of the City to Auberon including a typically awkward visit to her family and relatives. Afterward they retreat to the favored haunt The Seventh Saint Bar & Grill for a drink and some instruction in her gendered language and then home. On the way, she showed him an old subway crossing station and how one person standing in a corner facing the wall can hear someone else whispering to them while standing in another corner some distance away and no one will hear who

travels between them. The conversation turns sexy and they travel home only to be stopped near their destination by an enormous sound, that wasn’t a sound. Something had happened or changed. They heard the same thing far off at Edgewood.

The chapter ends with Tacey, Lily, and Lucy at Edgewood working on sewing and embroidery projects when they hear the “sound”. They know something is about to happen, but they are not inclined to share it clearly with us. More predictions and foreshadowing.

Little, Big reading schedule

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Book One: <i>Edgewood</i> | Book Three: <i>Old Law Firm</i> | September: Chaps 1, 2 |
| January: Chaps 1, 2, 3 | May: Chaps 1, 2 | October: Chaps 3, 4 |
| February: Chaps 4, 5 | June: Chaps 3, 4 | Book Six: <i>The Fairies’ Parliament</i> |
| Book Two: <i>Brother North: Wind’s Secret</i> | Book Four: <i>The Wild Wood</i> | November: Chaps 1, 2, 3 |
| March: Chaps 1, 2 | July: Chaps 1, 2 | December: Chaps 4, 5 |
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| | Book Five: <i>The Art of Memory</i> | |



Movies and TV

[JG] *Ennio* (Movie, Amazon Prime) Ennio Morricone is the legendary film composer who wrote music for the movies *Once Upon a Time in America*, *The Mission*, *Cinema Paradiso*, *The Untouchables*, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, and a bunch of Sergio Leone Spaghetti westerns like *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. I love love love Morricone’s music and listen to it often while I work. So, I knew I’d be interested in this documentary about his work, but I like it even more than I expected for what it had to say about the connection between music composed for film and symphonic art. It was fascinating to learn that Morricone was scorned by serious composers at the beginning of his career – his mentors criticized him for “stooping” to write for

films. But I loved finding out that these same serious composers, including his mentor, the person whose work Morricone most respected, eventually appreciated his work, and in fact apologized for their earlier criticism. (The turning point was *Once Upon a Time in America* with its gorgeous, emotional pieces like, “Deborah’s Theme,” which was universally acclaimed.) Yay. But the thing that surprised me the most was how his early experimentation with dissonant forms of music (employing sound effects that were not considered proper for serious music) were so instrumental (no pun intended) in his film scores. Think of the opening screech of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, which Morricone likened to a Coyote’s howl. I have

always said that I dislike dissonant music, but now I am having to reevaluate. If you like Morricone's music, or even if you are just a fan of music written for film, you will probably like this documentary.

Lou (Movie, Netflix) I've loved Allison Janney ever since I saw her in *West Wing*; that's why I wanted to see this movie. She plays a very different role than C.J. Cregg of *West Wing*; in *Lou* she plays a mysterious loner (and a burned CIA agent) living a quiet life with her dog, who battles the elements and her own dark past when a neighbor's little girl is kidnapped during a storm. Janney is believable as a tough, highly skilled agent who wants only to escape her past. But *Lou* was a pretty thin and forgettable story – so forgettable that I recognized scenes as we watched the movie. I'm pretty sure that I actually saw the movie once before and forgot most of it.

Manhunt (Series, Apple) Tobias Menzies (of *Outlander* and *The Crown*) did a fabulous job portraying Edwin Stanton, Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, as a man who was almost incapable of delegating any task, despite his increasingly debilitating asthma. Stanton pressed forward as far as he could with Lincoln's plan for reconstruction, pushing back against President Johnson's opposition. Stanton also led the manhunt for Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth and other members of the conspiracy. Anthony Boyle played Booth. Hamish Linklater played Abraham Lincoln who is assassinated in the first episode of *Manhunt*, though he returns in subsequent episodes in flashback conversations with his secretary of war, who he nicknamed, "Mars." *Manhunt* is a fabulous series with an enormous amount of historical detail I was not familiar with, and a great deal that eerily rhymes with current day events. Booth, for instance, considered himself to be so incredibly popular that he could shoot someone in the middle of Wall Street and be declared innocent of the crime. Highly recommended.

Monsieur Spade (Series; we watched this using Sling, but it is also available on Acorn) Twenty years after the events of the novel *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade has retired in the small town of Bozouls in southern France; it's 1963, the war has ended, and Sam has left his old life behind him. Nevertheless, plenty of people know something of his violent past as a private detective, but he tries his best to live a peaceful life; he even packs his gun and signature fedora away in the closet. He falls in love, he marries, and he settles down, but years later after his wife dies, he once again gets drawn into a tangled, violent mystery. *Monsieur Spade* offers a compact crime yarn that does right by both its

setting and its predecessors. Though I must say that it was almost impossible to maintain the visual cues of a noir story set in sunny, southern France. I thought Clive Owen did a very good job portraying Dashiell Hammett's character.

A Quiet Place: Day One (Movie, Theater) Well this movie will always be linked in my mind to my faceplant which happened as we were walking into the auditorium. After I told my family what had happened, and why I'd decided to skip a gathering scheduled for the weekend, they seemed inordinately obsessed by the fact that I had decided to stay in the theater and watch the movie, rather than go home, or better yet, go to the hospital. Well, I could tell I hadn't broken anything, I had plenty of napkins and an ice pack, and I figured that a movie would take my mind off the pain, which actually wasn't all that bad. And it worked. I was definitely distracted by the movie, which was perhaps the best film of the *Quiet Place* series, and I liked both the first and second one quiet a lot. *Day One* worked, I think, because it was such a simple story, about two people who were not trying to save the world. Wonderful acting by Lupita Nyong'o, especially!

Sharper (Movie, Apple) Starring Julianne Moore and John Lithgow (in a secondary role). We weren't familiar with the other major actors – Sebastian Stan, Briana Middleton, and Justice Smith –but they were good in their roles. A "sharper" is a slang word for swindler and in this movie, you gradually realize that almost every character is some kind of sharper. Few characters are what they initially seem to be, and several "long cons" get very complicated. I found it unbelievable that the longest of the cons actually worked. Nevertheless, the chief pleasure of this movie is trying to figure out which sharper will win the game. It's not a great film, but if you like stories about complicated stings, you would probably enjoy this one.

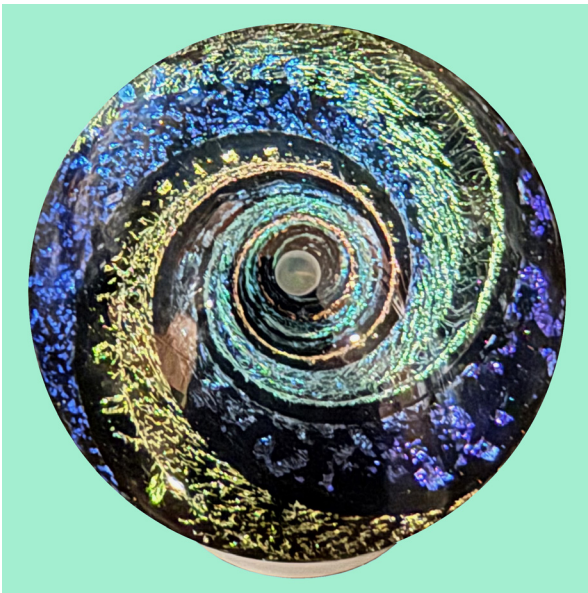
Thelma (Movie, Theater) The plot of *Thelma* mirrors the storyline of any number of action-adventure movies. I can imagine Liam Neeson being offered the role of a seemingly regular guy who loses his lifesavings to a scam artist. I can see him loading bullets into his Glock, driving off in his truck, and violently forcing the bad guys to return his money and life.... *Thelma* takes a different spin on this familiar story. June Squibb stars as Thelma Post, a 93-year-old grandmother who loses \$10,000 to a con artist on the phone. With help from a friend, she embarks on a treacherous journey across Los Angeles to reclaim her money. Her friend, Ben, is played by 81-year-old Richard Roundtree (known for his role in *Shaft*), whose mobility scooter they ride

while searching for the villain. And, wow, the villain is played by 81-year-old Malcolm McDowell. Other than Thelma's daughter, son-in-law, grandson, and the villain's grandson – who mostly flail around helplessly (but entertainingly) – all other characters are senior citizens met along the way. Almost every scene and line of dialog mocks the clichés of the action-adventure revenge tale. My favorite line was Thelma's when she successfully managed to transfer her money out of the bad guy's on-line bank account. She painstakingly vanquished a pop-up ad on the bad guy's computer

by clicking on the "X" in the ad's corner and then triumphantly declared, "I'm in!" sounding like a hacker who has penetrated a firewall using their mad cyber skills. I also loved how the movie used the fact that Thelma and Ben are experts at syncing their hearing aids to their smart phones and use this technology to defeat the bad guy. I've seen a video of June Squibb reciting tag lines from famous action-adventure movies ("Make my day!" "yippee ki-yay!" etc.) and she's amazingly funny. This movie is amazingly funny. Highly recommended.



From left to right: Jeanne Gomoll, John Bartelt, Lucy Huntzinger, Bill Bodden, Scott Custis, Tracy Benton. Our group sampled the Wisconsin-themed menu at The Old Fashioned, in honor of John and Lucy's visit. John was a founding member of the Madison SF Group and WisCon. He and Lucy visited Madison for a couple days after spending some time in Milwaukee with his family. Lucy sampled a Wisconsin Old Fashioned in honor of the restaurant. While she was happy with the use of brandy in the drink, she was less enthused when she found out that "soda" in Wisconsin means sweet soda (i.e., Fresca).



We bought this blown-glass sculpture at the Art Fair on the Square, Saturday, July 13. It's a sphere measuring about 3-inches in diameter and looks like a wormhole, through which you can see a planet floating in the focal point. Well, that's what it looks like in person. I'm not sure you would see that in this 2-D representation.



Rare sundown rainbow